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THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN SERVICE, II¹

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The problem of the training of teachers both prior to their appointment and after they begin service varies so much as you pass from city to city that it is very difficult for a person trying to deal with the subject in a general way to say anything that will be helpful or stimulating to a body of superintendents. Hence, it seems to me that it would be well to begin our conference together with a statement of the fact that the first thing, as I see it, for a superintendent to do is to define his problem of the training of teachers in relation to the general policy which he is trying to carry out in the schools over which he has charge. He must see the problem of training teachers in relation to his larger problem, and in order to do this it is necessary for him to make a survey of conditions as he finds them in his local environment. This survey should determine, first of all, the greatest needs of the system and, secondarily, the most practical ways of meeting those needs.

Any survey of the greatest needs of a city school system would include, it seems to me, a study of such matters as the following: The superintendent ought to study his teaching corps. He ought to find out just what sort of material he has to deal with, how well the corps has been selected, what the native ability of the teachers really is, what their past training has been, what their present attitude toward teaching is, whether that attitude is a professional one or otherwise, whether or not there is an appreciation of the science of teach-

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ing. He should include in his survey a study of the principals of the schools in order to find out what is the strength and what the weakness of each of these persons charged with the supervision of the individual schools. The survey should also attempt to discover the weak spots in the work. It is perfectly possible—nay, I should say, it is generally true—that in any particular school some grades are very much weaker than others and that the children may be even less advanced at the close of the grade at that point than when the particular teacher took charge of them. The superintendent should make use of modern methods to ascertain just what the weak spots are and what the cause is.

Again, he should investigate the external environment of the schools, the possibilities of the city to maintain the kind of education he would like to inaugurate, whether or not the city is financially able—and whether the city has been trained to appreciate its school system up to the point of appropriating the necessary funds if it is financially able—to maintain the schools. He should ascertain what the general attitude of the public is toward the schools in a general way and toward the profession of teaching. He should ask: What is the status of the teacher in that city? Is she appreciated socially? Does she stand high in the community, or is she looked upon as nothing more than a servant? What is the real attitude of the people of the city toward the public schools and the administration? We all know that it is possible to have the internal organization of our schools just what it ought to be and yet have the attitude of the public such that the kind of work done does not meet with recognition, so that the child does not get in the home that appreciation that makes him place a high value on the work of the school. This causes a tendency on the part of the children to drop out, no matter how excellent the system may be in its internal organization. One way of diagnosing that situation is to ascertain what is the persistence

in school of the children in that city and how it compares with other cities.

The superintendent should also study his board of education thoroughly. What will the board stand for? Do the board members understand how much of a salary it is necessary to pay in order to secure the type of teaching service and the kind of supervision required in order to conduct a really economical public-school system?

Last of all, the superintendent ought to take stock of himself. He ought to investigate his own equipment. He ought to find out whether he really does have a vision of what ought to be accomplished in that city, whether he has a practical and defensible educational policy that he feels will fit into that particular situation, whether or not he has a philosophy of education which meets modern needs and takes into account modern conditions. I do not know what you think of philosophy of education for a practical school man, but I am inclined to think that it is important. We are all philosophers. We may pride ourselves on the fact that we are practical philosophers. But on what is our philosophy of education based? What is the conception which the superintendent himself has with regard to his corps and his own limitations? How does he need to strengthen himself? How can he supplement his own weaknesses by taking advantage of the possibilities that lie about him in the system itself?

You can see at once what I have in mind. The point is this, that the superintendent must study himself. He must find out whether he has a real educational policy for which he is standing that aims at something definite and sets up a goal toward which he is going to work as long as he is definitely in that system. He ought to study also his limitations in the direction of his equipment—his equipment in experience, his equipment in the mastery of the technique of which the superintendent ought to be in possession. What does he know

about the technique of learning? What does he know about the technique of teaching—not only the art, the theory, the science of teaching, but the real, practical technique of teaching? What does he know about the technique of testing? Has he mastered that? What does he know about the theory of supervision, such as should be applied by a superintendent or a principal in settling the problems that arise in the conduct of the school? What does he need to do in order to reach in his own case the kind of training or the point of view to which he should attain in order that he may become an effective leader? Such a survey of the schools will prepare the superintendent to lay out a plan for the training of his teachers in service which will be effective because it is definite in its aims and methods.

The next step which the superintendent must take is to determine the best way and means of meeting these needs. This raises first the question of the sort of further training that he ought to get for himself. Where can he secure that training? When can he obtain it? How much can he secure for himself through his own efforts? Very often he must be clear enough about his limitations not to try to perform certain kinds of tasks. He must utilize his associates effectively in supplementing himself—that is, in doing types of work needed in the system for which he himself is not so well equipped as he ought to be. He may be very effective in his appointment of new men and women to the work of the schools by securing types of persons who can do things that he himself cannot do. The superintendent ought not to be afraid of bringing into the public-school system people bigger than himself. He is not the proper kind of superintendent if he does not try to bring in supervisors and principals who excel him. If he finds out how to utilize those whom he has in his corps and if he is wise in the selection of new men and women to supplement himself further, he has the foundation of a sound plan for the training of teachers.

After he has found what his own weaknesses are and how those are to be supplemented by the other persons in the system, he ought to see what effort can be made to cultivate a professional attitude on the part of the teachers. If such an attitude is not there, its development ought to be the first problem. How can he handle his teachers so as to secure a professional attitude if it is not already there? No superintendent can get a strong professional attitude among the teachers of a public-school system until he makes his teachers realize that it is genuine merit that counts in the work of the teacher for promotion. So long as teachers in the high schools or in the grades feel that after all the pretense of promoting people upon a basis of merit is nothing more than pretense, that the real way to gain promotion is to seek it through external influences, by trying to influence the board of education to see to it that they are promoted whether they merit it or not, or by appealing to the powers that be through an influential person, it is going to be next to impossible to secure a strong professional attitude. One of the first problems that ought to be studied by the superintendent is the question of promotion on merit as a basis for creating a proper attitude on the part of the teachers.

A merit plan raises immediately the question: What constitutes merit? What does it mean to go from one class to a higher class among the teachers? Suppose your teachers are graded into first, second and third ranks. What makes it possible for a teacher to go into the second rank from the lowest rank and from the second rank into the first rank? That ought to be clearly understood. I should say that the excellence which should determine promotion from the lowest rank to the next rank, assuming that the teachers are ranked in that way, would be actual classroom excellence, demonstrated efficiency in teaching and obtaining results in teaching. When a teacher goes from second rank into first rank, the superintendent ought

to continue to recognize excellence in teaching and efficiency, but he ought to include another element, namely, the ability of the teacher to assist in unifying the work of the school, her disposition to co-operate with other people, her readiness to assist the superintendent or the principal of the school, her recognition of the policy that ought to be followed in that school, her disposition to put into effect a policy after it has been adopted. That means, as you ascend from the lower rank into the higher rank approaching the principalship, you ought to put emphasis upon a broader type of efficiency.

Whatever the details of the merit system adopted, I am sure that one of the steps necessary to the creation of a professional attitude is to bring about the settled conviction that it is efficiency that counts and that what constitutes efficiency is pretty definitely known. That is not easy to accomplish, I know. Superintendents have a hard task, but, unless it can be accomplished, superintendents are not going to find teachers taking readily to courses offered in extension.

Suppose, then, we assume an established merit system. The next question is: What effective use can be made of supervision in promoting this spirit and in fostering a disposition to feel the need of continued instruction and in insuring a desire to take advantage of instruction if it is offered? This opens up the whole question of what supervision is and what it ought to be. Every superintendent ought to find out whether his supervision is that of an individual who comes in and points out faults from a high-and-mighty point of view or that of one who sits down with the teacher and says, "Why are you doing that? Do you think that would be better than this?" Such questions are stimulating. They turn the conference into a consultation with a friend and adviser. Superintendents should cultivate a type of supervision which is directive, to be sure, but directive as a result of suggestion. Not only should a superintendent exhibit this type of super-

vision himself; he should train and utilize to the fullest extent his supervisory staff for similar supervision. If each teacher in the system comes to realize that she can learn and understand the principles of supervision and instruction which guide the superintendent and the supervisor in telling her what to do, then she will understand that if the opportunity is offered she can acquire the knowledge and the skill which will enable her to talk these things over in an objective way with the supervisor when she comes into the school. This will do away with the fear that comes from a sort of consciousness that that supervisor knows a great deal more than the teacher.

Assuming now a spirit of co-operative scrutiny of school problems resulting from discussions between the teachers and the superintendent, the next step is to organize conferences. If the system is large enough to include several principals, the superintendent of schools might very well call into a sort of seminar the principals of his system and take up with them the discussion of various problems which will help them to get the point of view that is to be the point of view of the entire system. He cannot do anything better than to hold a number of such general conferences, provided he is big enough to do it. He can stimulate different kinds of study. He can call attention to the various experiments that are being carried on in education. He can encourage his own principals to try out methods of testing. By training his principals in this point of view he will have a sort of faculty for use in the training of his teachers. The training transmitted to the teachers will not be in the form of courses of study organized as in a college, but rather informal instructions dealing with experiences and with materials so organized as to make the teachers see that they really do have value in the everyday work of the schoolroom. Work of this sort will create professional interest in a teacher and at the same time make her a happier, more contented individual. I think I may say this in all truth. I believe that

the school teachers of St. Louis are better satisfied than those in other cities. That may be an illusion on my part, but if you find a group of people who think that they are doing something worth while and give them a sort of professional standard and show them that they are looked upon as being on a high social level, they keep young longer.

The next step that I would suggest is this. I would so arrange certain courses given by my principals and by the superintendent as to secure credit in the state normal school of the district in which my city was located or, in the case of the high-school teachers, perhaps credit in the state university. You might find it necessary and desirable to have representatives from these institutions come and look in on you and decide whether they may properly give recognition for the work. I make that suggestion because I believe that it is important to create an idea on the part of the teachers that they are getting something, that they are working for a higher education without leaving their positions. Secure, if you can, the stimulus that comes from recognition of that work in the state normal school or university. The state normal school ought to seek that sort of opportunity, and the city being served by the state normal school ought to be ready to give that sort of co-operation between the state normal school and the city itself.

If the general spirit of professional study is once established, there will issue many collateral results. For example, the demands made on teachers at the time of appointment will be higher. There must be some positive force working to improve the teaching force. As the cost of living goes up and salaries remain stationary, the tendency will be to fall back to the lowest kind of native ability which can be used in the school-room—to go down rather than up. This is a situation which we must definitely face and endeavor to meet. I think that we can do it. We can do it in several ways. One of those ways

would be to discuss real educational economy in season and out of season with your board of education and with the people of the city.

It is very easy for a board of education to mistake economy for extravagance or to mistake extravagance for economy. I can show, and I am sure you could show me, many a school system which is thought by the people of the community to be extremely economical, but is in reality extremely extravagant. Here you have a school system that is so operated as to keep the children in the elementary school down in the lower grades; that is, there is a large element of retardation in that system. The children have to remain in school until fourteen. It costs more to keep a child in the seventh or eighth grade than it does to keep him in the fifth. You might have a system of schools that was operated in such a way as to encourage retardation, a system that might be pointed to by the ignorant member of society as an extremely economical school system. There is parsimony in actual expenditure of dollars which is not justifiable, and there is true economy in making every dollar that you do spend accomplish a desirable result. You can use the analogy of a factory to illustrate just what you have in the school system. The ordinary business man will understand true business economy. If you can show to a city that the most economical school system is the one that pays a pretty high salary and that in paying the salary you are making an investment that makes out well in the income which you will realize, then you have accomplished something.

One way of bringing home the lesson of true economy to the board of education and the community is to induce them to study the products of your high school. As I said yesterday, we in St. Louis have found out with certainty that it pays tremendously to take the graduates of the high schools that rank high in the school. They have a habit of success that enables them to go into the work of the schools, meet the

problems of the schools, and solve them successfully, whereas a person who is satisfied with low standards thinks you are intolerable and offensive if you expect anything else than a low grade of efficiency. If our courses for the training of teachers lead to such campaigns of education of the community, not only will they benefit the schools through what they do for the teachers, but they will raise public esteem for the schools and they will bring to the schools new and helpful support.

Large advantages can be secured, I believe, by the cultivation of more intimate relations between institutions of higher education and city systems. Where a city is large enough to justify its support of a city training school, this advantage is easy to secure. For smaller cities I believe that it is entirely possible to cultivate productive relations with the neighboring normal school. I should advocate the sending of high-grade prospective teachers to a normal school, the local board of education paying expenses.

Suppose the board of education pays the expenses in the state normal school of a young woman, with the understanding that she is coming back to teach in that system and on that condition. In the first place, I would make an arrangement, it seems to me, with the faculty of that normal school that the young woman should come back for a half-year into my own public-school system and apprentice in a school that would be selected by me for that purpose under a principal who has very great ability in the supervision of teachers, taking a half-year of apprentice teaching and observing and studying all the work of the school in the next to the last half-year of her course. She might, if it is desired, be supervised by a representative of the normal school while she is doing that work. She goes back to the normal school for her final training. She will carry back to the faculty a better understanding of your school system than it could achieve in fifty years. She will have a

very great interest in the problems that have arisen. She will be very anxious to discuss these problems with the members of the faculty and she will insist on their giving real solutions. The amount of stimulus that is given in that half-year as shown in the last half-year of her work in the normal school is something that was a revelation to us when we tried it. The teacher-in-training has seen the thing really being done under actual, normal conditions, not simply under conditions fixed up for the purpose of practice. She is the best material that you have in your city. She will go back there and give that normal school an insight into the workings of a city school system that is wholesome for them to get.

Not only that, but when she comes back into your school system, if the normal school is doing something that is worth while, she will serve as a stimulus to your teachers and to your whole system—probably not very much at first, but by and by the feeling grows. You get a few teachers of that type and the others realize after a short time that they are back numbers, that they are not keeping pace, and they will want the training themselves. If you have the kind of arrangement which we have been discussing, you will find it easy to arrange either locally or at the normal school itself for certain courses to be given by the faculty to your teachers in service.

I have offered you suggestions concerning the way in which I believe our experience can be extended to cover other situations. We have found that every method of conference, of co-operation, between the city school system, the corps of teachers, the principals, and the superintendent that can be worked out and satisfactorily applied is a distinct gain. My advice is that such plans be developed as widely as possible.